By Meredith Goad

This article first appeared in the Portland Press Herald, October 25, 2013. Reprinted with permission.

Chef Chris Long of Natalie’s, the restaurant at the Camden Harbour Inn, took home the coveted title of Maine Lobster Chef of the Year Thursday after preparing a rich dish of lobster poached in butter, served with grilled maitake and oyster mushrooms and a corn-and-parsnip ragout.

“I was super shocked,” Long said after the competition at Portland’s Ocean Gateway. “I’m definitely grateful, definitely blessed.”

Long created the dish especially for the sold-out event, which is a highlight of the Harvest on the Harbor food and wine festival. His sparring partners in the kitchen were Shanna O’Hea, chef/owner of Academe, the restaurant at the Kennebunk Inn; Brandon Blethen, executive chef at Robert’s Maine Grill in Kittery; and Long’s colleague Jon Gaboric, executive chef at Natalie’s. The competition was hosted by celebrity chef Michele Ragussis, who cooks seasonally at the Pearl Restaurant in Rockland.

The chefs made four very different lobster preparations, which “shows people all the different ways you can cook Maine lobster and enjoy Maine lobster,” noted Marianne La-Croix, acting executive director of the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative. “A lot of people, especially in New England, think that lobster is the traditional boiled lobster dinner.” O’Hea gave her dish an Asian twist, preparing a “Lobster Lo’Maine” served in small Chinese take-out cartons.

Gaboric made a refined dish that tasted of the sea and is part of his restaurant’s five-course lobster tasting menu. He served butter-poached lobster with a corn and miso puree, shaved radish salad, geoduck dressing...
The month of November is a time to reflect on all for which we are thankful. Maine's lobstermen and the businesses that depend on them have more than their share of blessings to count. As the year and the lobster season start to wind down, we are once again grateful that we can continue the traditions of many generations before us, protecting Maine's amazing marine resources and working in a profession that we love.

In the November issue of Landings, we feature an update on Maine's certification under the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and the steps being taken to fully capitalize on this prestigious eco-label. This month, we learn more about efforts of Maine companies to market lobster in Asian markets with the help of Food Export Northeast. Jason Joyce, an MLA board member from Swan's Island, talks about his experience as part of a group of American food producers who toured France at the invitation of the French Ministry of Agriculture. The invitation was extended in order to provide an exchange of ideas between the Americans and their French counterparts concerning promotion and protection of regionally identified agricultural products.

Landings also continues to provide you with information on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and what this new health insurance law will mean for you. This month, MLAs Navigator April Gilmore provides an update on her work helping Maine lobstermen and their families understand the ACA requirements including health insurance options, subsidies and penalties. April's work with the industry shows the MLAs commitment to ensuring that Maine lobstermen have the information they need to make an informed decision when it comes to health insurance enrollment.

Kevin Lewis of Maine Community Health Options also describes how health insurance cooperatives are bringing a new business model to the health insurance market. We also include many updates this month on issues facing the lobster industry. The MLA pages are packed with information on policy issues and recent state and regional meetings. Togue Brawn makes a compelling argument for fishermen to advocate for measures to protect the Northern Gulf of Maine scallop industry through the New England Fisheries Management Council process. In addition, the University of Maine provides an update on its plans to develop a commercial offshore wind project off Monhegan Island in concert with several private firms.

The November Landings continues several ongoing features. This month’s “Trap to Plate” features an in-depth discussion on the how futures contracts have been used in the seafood industry. We meet Henry Pope, a young lobsterman learning the trade on Swan's Island, and we feature Wayne Hamilton, founder and owner of Hamilton Marine, as our remarkable person of the month.

The coast of Maine cuts a wide swath through the Gulf of Maine; it’s unlikely any one publication can do justice to all that is going on in the many small towns and harbors along the coast. We hope that through Landings you can keep up with just some of the intriguing people and activities that take place, no matter the time of year, among the lobstermen and other fishermen of the state. And we welcome YOUR ideas. Drop us an email or letter with suggestions for stories that you would like us to cover!

Thoughts from MLCA President Patrice McCarron

As the cold season comes on and lobstermen begin to haul in their gear, it’s time to be grateful for traditions kept and a future planned for. Photo courtesy of the Penobscot Marine Museum, from the Atlantic Fisherman collection.

COASTAL OUTLOOK Thoughts from MLCA President Patrice McCarron

MLCA fosters thriving coastal communities and preserves Maine’s lobstering heritage

Send your support to: Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance | P.O. Box 315 | Kennebunk, Maine | 04043 | www.mlcalliance.org

The MLCA invites you to support Maine’s lobster industry. Donations of $25 or more include a subscription to Landings.

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By Togue Brown

Maine fishermen have before them a rare and significant opportunity. The scallop resource in the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) scallop management area appears to be recovering. If the resource recovers to levels seen in the latter part of the last century, significant profits could be earned in a fishery well that supports small, privately owned vessels. The NGOM permit, which is what Maine fishermen should be excited about. The NGOM is controlled by a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) which is currently 70,000 pounds, a 200-pound trip limit and a 105” maximum dredge width. These conservative measures are designed to protect the NGOM scallop resource, which occurs in patches and is prone to “booms and busts”. Because of an inconsistency that has yet to be corrected, Limited Access (DAS) boats are not bound by these restrictions. DAS boats are authorized to remove an unlimited amount of scallops - potentially hundreds of thousands or even millions of pounds - from an area supposedly protected by a 70,000 pound TAC.

The NGOM was a huge coup that went largely unnoticed. In Maine, fishermen were focusing their attention on the state resource. Given the apparent lack of scallops in the federal waters of the NGOM and the dramatic management changes DMR was making (full disclosure: I helped craft and implement many of these changes), that’s understandable. As a result, the NGOM scallop management area, which offers a remarkable opportunity to Maine fishermen, was created without significant input from Maine fishermen.

There are three types of permits in the federal scallop fishery. Large vessels fishing under Days at sea (DAS) would allow Maine fishermen to diversify and strengthen their businesses. This is why it is so important that we protect and strengthen the NGOM federal scallop fishery.

The NGOM scallop management area encompasses all U.S. waters north of 42° 20’ (roughly Boston Harbor northward). It was established as its own distinct management area to be managed independent of the rest of the federal resource. The area was created to provide access to the Gulf of Maine scallop resource to small boats and fishing communities that would otherwise have lost access to it under the IFQ system. When creating the NGOM management area, the New England Fisheries Management Council (the Council) recognized several unique properties of the area, including a patchy resource that fluctuated between booms and busts. Although the NGOM had not generated significant landings in recent years, the Council recognized the NGOM scallop fishery’s historic importance to small boats and fishing communities. The NGOM management area was established “as a placeholder for future management of scallops in the NGOM if and when they return.” (Amendment 11)

The establishment of a distinct area for the NGOM scallop fishery back in 2008 was a huge coup that went largely unnoticed. In Maine, fishermen were focusing their attention on the state resource. Given the rare and significant opportunity may be lost.

Today that diversity is largely gone. The majority of Maine fishermen and fishing communities are almost entirely dependent on lobster. Recent reductions in lobster prices and increases in costs have only underscored the dangerous predicament our fishermen and communities are in. Sadly, very few options exist that would allow Maine fishermen to diversify and strengthen their businesses. This is why it is so important that we protect and strengthen the NGOM federal scallop fishery.

By Paul Anderson

In August, I provided a general overview and update about the University of Maine’s Deepwater Offshore Wind Research Program. As with any research program, things continue to change and evolve and this article is part of an effort to keep you informed. On August 30, Maine Aqua Ventus GP LLC, whose three general partners are Cianbro, Emera Inc., and Maine Prime Technologies, LLC, a spin-off company representing the University of Maine, submitted a proposal to the Maine Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) in response to a Request for Proposals for deepwater offshore wind projects. The proposal contains information about the engineering, design, monitoring, and other aspects of the project that the MPUC needs to determine if the project qualifies for a power purchase agreement under the objectives of Maine’s Ocean Energy Act. There are certain proprietary details about the business side of the project that are held as confidential. An overview of the project can be found at MaineAquaVentus.com. If approved by the MPUC, Maine Aqua Ventus will develop a two-turbine, 12 MW floating deepwater offshore wind energy pilot project, known as Maine Aqua Ventus I, in 2017 in the state-approved Deepwater Offshore Wind Test Site located just south of Monhegan. These turbines will be connected to the mainland by a subsea cable that will run northwesterly across Muscongus Bay and make landfall somewhere to the north of New Harbor. The line would then be extended across land to connect to the CMP sub-station in Bristol. In addition, a smaller cable will connect to Monhegan, allowing island residents access to electrical power.

There are many details to be worked out with Monhegan. There are still surveys and evaluations that need to be completed as the final decisions are made about cable placement, landfall, and connection to the grid. Some of these unknowns are the subject of the research program. The University is having conversations with fishermen, harbormasters, and other stakeholders to determine the best cable route. Through conversations with fishermen in the area and with the Department of Marine Resources, we are certainly aware of concerns about activities that impact lobster gear. The intention is to time the surveys and cable/turbine deployment to be compatible with the timing of the lobster fishery. We’re also aware of the potential impact on some of the shrimp tows in that part of the bay and we’re exploring a route that minimizes overlap while still providing for an enforceable cable closure strip where mobile gear would be prohibited.

If you’ve made it this far, you probably have a lot of questions. We’re organizing a few community meetings to present the information and to answer your questions. You can learn more about this program at: MaineAquaVentus.com, www.Deepwind.org, or contact me at Maine Sea Grant (panderson@maine.edu).

Please join us on one of the following dates:
November 12: 6-8 p.m. – Friendship Town Office
November 14: 6-8 p.m. – Bristol Consolidated School
November 25: 6-8 p.m. – Hermit Gut Learning Center, Port Clyde
We continue our series on the new Affordable Care Act, which goes into effect in January, 2014, and its implications for Maine’s lobstermen.

By Kevin Lewis

Consumer behavior drives marketplaces around the world. What moves us to action has been closely studied and continuously perfected by the advertisers of Madison Avenue and elsewhere. But instead of being manipulated for others’ gain, many consumers have realized dividends by combining an ownership role and a governance stake with their consumer interest as they engage in business ventures. Examples abound among financial institutions, electricity suppliers, feed suppliers and granaries, and grocery stores where consumers have together taken up a controlling voice, forming cooperatives and exerting direct control over the production and business facets of these goods and services. Now, a new breed of health plans – the Consum er Operated and Oriented [Health] Plan, or CO-OP – is reaping a successful nonprofit health plan model with these very same cooperative principles.

The Affordable Care Act, our national health reform law, authorized the CO-OPs and CO-OPs are in existence across the country. Maine Community Health Options (MCHO) is located in Lewiston. It serves as Maine’s CO-OP from York to Aroostook County and from Washington County to Oxford County and is a participating member of the National Alliance of State Health CO-OPS.

Like cooperatives, Consumer Operated and Oriented Plans are member-led, depend on strong consumer engagement, and share the same seven principles of cooperatives. According to the 2012 International Year of Cooperatives, a key principle of cooperatives is autonomy and independence: CO-OPs can never be bought or sold and are prohibited from being influenced by the pre-existing insurance industry, thereby ensuring independence in development and operations. By law, the new health insurance CO-OPs must always be non-profit, and they are obligated to return any net revenues back into the control of the board of directors. In- vents the ability of new entrants in the insurance arena to make a difference, the CO-OP model is making a positive impact nationally and here in Maine. Premium prices in states with CO-OPs are lower than in states without. The presence of MCHO has meant a competitive market in Maine since just one other carrier is operating in the Health Insurance Marketplace. MCHO’s plans are priced lowest compared to other Marketplace offerings, and one exception: Bronze and Catastrophic plans in Rating Area 1 (Cumberland and York Counties). With this exception noted, MCHO’s prices are lowest for all other plans across the whole state, and all plans in Rating Areas 2, 3, and 4.

This positive initial start is heartening, but is only the beginning, giving true power of consumer engagement. Because 85% of the costs of health care insurance are driven by utilization of services, consumer involvement is a fundamental necessity in lowering premium costs and out-of-pocket cost sharing. Dr. Don Berwick, founder of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and recent head of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, spoke in Maine earlier this year and demonstrated that the excess financial burdens imposed by today’s health care industry are the result of a multi-layered array of problems and inefficiencies. These issues include administrative waste, unnecessary utilization (e.g., duplicative tests or even harmful procedures), and so-called preference-sensitive care, i.e., stuff that we are convinced we want even though the best medical science shows we don’t need it. In short, as a nation we haven’t been using our tremendous resources in the best manner.

In an earlier column, the importance of MCHO’s value-based insurance design was explored as a means of reducing the financial barrier to high-value services (e.g., prevention and management of chronic conditions) thereby helping to improve health outcomes at lower total costs. Through alignment of incentives, payment reform and value-based insurance design, we aim to stem the ever-growing burden of health care costs. Fundamental to each of these factors is consumer engagement in wellness. Given the importance of consumer engagement in one’s own health, the role of consumer engagement in the design and direction – the governance – of the health plan itself is a powerful pairing.

There is perhaps no greater measure of consumer engagement than direct control of the board of directors. Indeed, the true power of the CO-OP model comes in having members directly overseeing how premium dollars are spent; providing input on the future course of MCHO plan benefits; and promoting ongoing member engagement – both to enhance health outcomes for MCHO members and to ensure affordable coverage for all. Elections will be held at the end of our first plan year in the fall of 2014.

Kevin Lewis is the CEO of Maine Community Health Options, a Consumer Operated and Oriented Plan (CO-OP). MCHO is a private, nonprofit entity. Photo courtesy of MCHO.
By Sarah Paquette

Henry Pope knows the meaning of hard work. At 14 years old, he owns all of his gear and his boat outright. “He paid for it himself with the money he earned from lobsters,” his dad, Chris, said. “And if I lend him money, he is really good at paying me back,” Henry started out on a 10-foot punt his dad built him, then moved up to a 16-foot skiff he and his dad fixed up together. He now fishes from *One Piece at a Time,* a 22’ Sisu. “My boat’s name is from a Johnny Cash song. But it also means you start out small and can get back to what he loves – spending time on the water,” he explained.

Even though it’s only November, Henry is anxious for the school year to be over so he can get back to what he loves – spending time on the water.

Right now, Henry has 108 traps that he will set next summer. And a newer, bigger boat may be a reality soon. “My dad and I have been working on a 28’ Crowley Real in the shop. It was a mess when we bought it, but it’s looking good now,” Henry said with pride. “If it doesn’t turn out to be something I want, we can sell it and start looking for another boat.”

Even though it’s only November, Henry is anxious for the school year to be over so he can get back to what he loves – spending time on the water. "I mostly do it for fun, but we use some for firewood," he said. His dream, however, is to lobster fulltime. "When I get over the school thing, I want a bigger boat and more traps so I can make a living lobstering," he explained.

Henry lives with his parents and younger sister in Freeport, but lobsterers from Swan’s Island. He said his parents bought a house on the island when he was young and the family has spent summers out there since. “It feels like home out there. Everyone is really friendly and welcoming and Henry has had great support from the community,” Chris said. Henry has completed about half of his hours for the apprenticeship program and is looking forward to spending next summer on the water. “I just love everything about lobstering,” he said. "Being on the water, working with my hands, spending time outside, everything. And the work ethic. I really like that.”

When the eighth grader isn’t on the water, he enjoys spending time on his tractor skidding logs in the woods behind his house. "I mostly do it for fun, but we use some for firewood," he said. His dream, however, is to lobster fulltime. “When I get over the school thing, I want a bigger boat and more traps so I can make a living lobstering," he explained.

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### Maine Lobster Zone Council Members (updated October 2013)

Names shaded in gray reflect the winners of the 2013 election.

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Wayne Hamilton, Searsport

By Nancy Griffin

If Wayne C. Hamilton has ever slowed down in his 66 years, there’s no evidence of it. Hamilton, owner and hands-on operator of five Hamilton Marine stores—the largest supplier to Maine’s marine industry—has worked on the water since the age of 10. He started, as so many Maine kids do, by going lobstering, in his case with a family friend.

“He took me every time the boat moved,” said Hamilton. “I got a lot of experience with him that helped me into my future. He was a mentor.” Hamilton’s future would include, and still does, lobstering, photography, community service, ferrying harbor pilots to the big vessels they guide and, of course, selling marine supplies.

At age 13, Hamilton graduated from the friend’s 42-foot vessel to his own 12-foot skiff with a five-horsepower motor, his own lobster license and twelve traps at the beginning of the summer. By the middle of summer, he had added twelve more; by summer’s end, he had added another dozen.

“The next year, I had a 14-foot Mirrorcraft with a 15-horsepower Evinrude and I was fishing fifty traps,” Hamilton recalled. Within two more years, he had a 16-foot Starcraft, a 33-horsepower engine and was hauling 120 traps by hand. “No pot hauler. I used the armstrong method” he said. Hamilton had acquired his six-passenger license and begun ferrying pilots out of Searsport. For a short period, 1977 to 1983, he worked only at Hamilton Marine and did wedding photography.

“Loraine was helping to support me by working at a bank, but in 1980, she came to work in the garage with me,” Hamilton said. “We had to work harder for lobsters here.”

Lobstering wasn’t that great here in ‘the head of the mud puddle’,” Hamilton said. “We had to work harder for lobsters here.”

he said. By 1982, they had moved the business to a Route 1 building that now serves as the sail loft for the business. By 1983 Hamilton Marine was so busy he stopped doing wedding photography.

He and Loraine still work together.

Besides Searsport, the business has locations now in Portland, Rockland, Southwest Harbor and Jonesport. They’ve added a huge new warehouse behind the sizeable main store in Searsport.

“I still do the pilot boat work, getting on to fifty years next May,” said Hamilton. Getting pilots aboard the ships that ply Penobscot Bay often means going out in the middle of the night and in all kinds of weather. Hamilton has also been Searsport’s harbormaster since 1985. And he serves on the boards of the Penobscot Marine Museum and Waldo County Healthcare.

“I’ve probably slowed down to about 70 hours a week though,” he said matter-of-factly. Hamilton usually starts his day around 5:30 in the morning, “I used to be a late-night person, but now I’m an early person.”

The company’s clientele now includes commercial and pleasure craft of every size and boat operators from every corner of the planet. Hamilton, however, maintains his lobster license and uses it primarily to test gear, to try out the inventory before selling it to his favorite customer base, the lobstermen. He brings employees out on the boat to train them in the use of the equipment so they will be knowledgeable when explaining it to customers.

He does all the photography for Hamilton Marine, and has been photographing Searsport since 1973, documenting the lobstering industry, the tugs, the ships, lobster boat races, sunrises and sunsets, and changes in the town and harbor. He started out shooting slides, went to film about twelve years later and switched to digital in 2004. He’s shot both still pictures and video, and hopes to do a book as well as a documentary on Searsport one day.

“Photography is my biggest hobby,” Hamilton said, but he admits to rowing in the harbor for a couple of miles in the morning at least a couple of times a week, or going swimming. “I’m trying to slow up a little,” he said. But when his secretary Katy Curtis was asked how Wayne’s doing in the slowing up department, she laughed and said, “Fair.”

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Dealing with the media has long been a part of MLA's work. When I started nearly 14 years ago, typically we'd deal with a few rounds of questions from reporters on what the lobsterman looked like, lobster landings and changes to the management system. But today, things are very different. While press interest in lobster is still cyclical, the volume and intensity of the reporting has grown every year.

The MLA has always played an important role with the media. As Maine’s largest lobster industry association, it is our job to speak for the fleet of independent members we represent. We do so in a way that is authentic and true to our industry, while ensuring that we always portray Maine’s lobster industry in a positive light.

That has become harder and harder to do as the information age has broadened media’s access to Maine’s lobster industry. Having Maine lobster in the news should be a good thing. But it seems some in our industry are a bit confused about when it is appropriate to talk about our frustrations and when we should portray ourselves in the best light possible.

I have certainly been critical of lobstermen and others who are quick to talk about the boat price, complain about how hard life is or reveal the next boogie man facing the lobster industry to the press. That sort of discussion and message is not good for the industry. It undermines the importance of each lobsterman as an independent business owner, it undermines the value of Maine lobster in the marketplace, and it can reduce consumer trust in our brand.

And that is a shame because despite our struggles, the Maine lobster industry has a lot going for it. The problem is, it’s reaching its full potential. The key is to understand when it is appropriate to talk about the negative stuff. I am a strong believer that we should keep our messages real with the media, yet always keep it positive. We need to learn to keep our dirty laundry to ourselves. With the interest and scrutiny our industry faces from the press, this is getting harder and harder to do.

In late October, the New York Times ran an article entitled “Hit by Low Prices, Lobstermen are at Odds in U.S. and Canada.” The reporter clearly had a story in mind that he wanted to tell when he set out to write this piece and did a huge disservice to our industry. The story made several claims, all loosely based on recent happenings, but none reflective of the reality of lobstering right now in the state. The story led the reader to believe that there is constant fighting between Maine and Canadian lobstermen and that Maine is not a player in overseas markets because we land soft-shell lobster.

In reality, the Maine and Canadian lobster industries have an excellent and long-standing relationship. U.S. and Canadian lobstermen are united through our chosen profession and the border is not good for our industry. It often undervalues the importance of expanding the time period for the lobster season and by the similarity in the issues we face.

In November 2012, Maine exported more than 39 million pounds to overseas markets in 2010, with the majority going to Italy, Spain and France. By contrast, Canada exported more than 21 million pounds to overseas markets, with the majority going to Japan, France and Belgium.

And I probably don’t need to remind anyone of the recent round of press generated by PETA, impugning our industry, our practices and our product. MLA took a tough stance on this to let the world know that Maine’s lobster industry is proud of what we do, and we won’t be pushed around by a radical interest.

Some will say that there is no such thing as bad press. I think that Maine’s lobster industry will continue to attract media attention from all over the world from people who are interested in our story. It is incumbent upon each of us to emphasize the good and keep people excited about lobster like an egg, to minimize stress to the live animal and ensure a future for the lobster industry. Lobstermen can unite through our chosen profession and by the similarity in the issues we face. Lobstermen are united through our chosen profession and the border is not good for our industry.
The board will pass this suggestion on to the Commissioner who is currently engaged in discussions with lobstermen on how to improve the industry. Lobstermen have put forward many other suggestions including a larger gauge during summer months, increases in the vent size, taking extra days off, shortening fishing days, forming a super lobster coop, contract pricing, etc. Overall, the MLA board wants to see what recommendations come from the Commissioner’s work and then consider a comprehensive strategy with clear goals and objectives before supporting any changes to the management system. The MLA sees its role at this point to continue to facilitate discussion and keep the industry informed of what’s going on.

Gerry Cushman discussed a recent visit by Alaska fishermen who operate under a different business model. They are not comfortable making a judgement as to learn that Maine lobstermen do not negotiate lobster prices in advance of fishing. The board also discussed some of the innovative programs under way at some of the coops to reduce shrinkage, add accountability measures such as tracing lobster to individual harvesters and marketing product directly. These efforts have led to a significant improvement in lobster prices locally.

Patrice provided several updates on media and policy issues. The MLA took the lead in responding to the threats from PETA against Maine’s processors and lobster industry. Media inquiries ranging from climate change threats from PETA against Maine’s lobster industry to local issues were handled through the MLA’s work and will not comfort or address these concerns. The Council is happy with the MLA’s role at this point to continue to facilitate disclosure and keep its messages in the media positive and keep its internal debates out of the press.

The Sportsman’s Alliance of Maine asked the MLA to join a coalition opposing the bear referendum if it moves forward. The Board felt strongly that this issue is beyond the scope of the MLA’s work and will not take a position. The Board discussed the proposed dredging project for Searsport. The directors understand and support maintenance dredging projects but expressed serious concerns over the expanded dredge plan. There was also some concern about where the spoils would be dumped. There was also some concern about the expanded dredge plan.

The MLA submitted comments on the whale rules, based on comments heard through the public hearings and MLA Board’s feedback. These were summarized in the October newsletter.

Patrice was interviewed by the Canadian panel investigating how lobster prices are set. The report is due out this fall. There was some concern expressed around the state of the lobster fishery in southern Maine due to reports of lower catches coupled with soft lobster prices. Without volume, lobstermen will not be able to stay in business, making southern Maine lobstermen particularly vulnerable right now.

The MLA is working with lobstermen to help them understand the requirements of the Affordable Care Act. MLA will be scheduling information meetings beginning in late October. Lobstermen and their family members should contact April Gilmore at the MLA if they have any questions or need help exploring health insurance coverage options through the Health Insurance Marketplace.

Amy Lent from Maine Maritime Museum is looking for a few people to update the museum’s lobster exhibit. The museum needs a 10.5-inch gauge, which was used in the 1800’s, and older boat electronics typical of what was in use in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Contact the MLA office if you can donate any of these items to the museum.

LOBSTER ADVISORY COUNCIL

The LAC met on October 15 to discuss nominations for the board of the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC). The LAC has compiled ten names to fill the public seats – Jen Lewin, Betty MacDonald, Nancy Dusselback, Paul Myers, Phil Teverow, Cameron Bonshey, Karan Cushman, Stephen Brooks, Vaughn Stinson and Cal Hancock; and 17 nominations to represent dealers/processors: Cubby Petetgrove, Pete Almony, Tim Harpins, Stephanie Nadeau, Hugh Reynold, Emily Lane, Mike Cote, Dan Staples, Larry Rich, Bear Woodman, Terry Watkison, Dana Rice, Tom Craig, Jim Petetgrove, John Headley, Luke Holden and Kyle Murdock.

The LAC felt that the lists include some very strong nominees, but members did not know all of them and were not comfortable making a recommendation on whether or not they should submit the full list of nominations to the Commissioner for additional vetting.

Sarah Coots offered a proposal that would allow lobstermen to send a representative to the Legislative to help the Maine Lobster Foundation with the process of sending a representative to the Legislative to help the MLA’s Keeper members!

Many thanks to these fine businesses, the MLA’s Keeper members!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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<tr>
<td>Atlantic Edge Lobster</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gycottm@maine.com">gycottm@maine.com</a></td>
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<td>Bell Power Systems</td>
<td>Maine Lobster Coop</td>
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<td>Buoysticks.com</td>
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Marine Resource Committee Chairs, Rep. Walter Kumienga and Senator Chris Johnson, stated that the Committee hopes to see recommendations from the industry to improve the problems with the lobster industry’s limited entry system. In the absence of industry recommendations, the Committee will consider taking action on its own.

A research team conducting aquaculture training for lobstermen provided an overview of the program which took place last year. Lobstermen interested in receiving training in shellfish and seaweed aquaculture should contact Dana Morse at Maine Sea Grant at dmorse@maine.edu or 207-814-4899.

Carl Wilson reported that DMR has added a new staff person to work on the lobster sea sampling program.

Continued on page 10
The DMR is about one-third of the way through sampling for lobster settlement and preliminary results indicate that this will be the third year in a row with very low settlement. Low settlement is now a trend, but this survey is not a forecast tool. It is possible that lobsters are settling across more substrate, leading to lower numbers in sampled areas. Similarly, there is an increasing trend in the occurrence of shell disease, which is most prevalent in southern Maine. However, the actual observed incidence remains relatively low. Most reports of new shell lobsters with shell disease, in fact, were new shell lobsters carrying scars rather than the disease itself, meaning the lobster molted out of a diseased shell. Carl noted that things are changing and encourages lobstermen to continue to contact DMR staff if they observe anything of concern.

DMR is changing its policy on how replacement tags are issued. The department will no longer require a signature from a Marine Patrol Officer. Instead, a lobsterman can fill out the trap tag replacement form and either mail it or bring it to DMR in Hallowell to receive replacement tags, up to 10%. The process for replacing catastrophic losses of tags remains the same. The DMR reports that they are issuing significantly fewer trap tags by not issuing replacement tags in advance. In 2006, 160,000 replacement tags were issued compared to 2012 when only 40,000 replacement tags were issued.

NORTHEAST REGIONAL PLANNING BODY

Maine’s Advisory Group for the Northeast Regional Planning Body (RPB) met on October 15 to review Maine’s strategy for this regional ocean planning initiative. The RPB was formed through a Presidential Executive Order in 2010 as part of the National Ocean Policy designed to better manage our nation’s oceans and coasts. Nine RPBs were formed around the U.S. to develop regional ocean products or a plan that is driven by specific needs of the geography and that builds on existing efforts. Members of the Northeast RPB include federal, tribal, state, and New England Fishery Management Council representatives; its leadership is shared by federal, state, and tribal co-leads.

The MLA has been included in Maine’s Advisory Group, which has been asked to advise state officials to ensure that Maine’s interests are adequately represented through the RPB. The Advisory Group includes Maine’s key ocean and coastal sectors, such as commercial fishing, industry, environment and academia.

ASMFC NORTHERN SHRIMP SECTION

The Northern Shrimp Section met in Portsmouth on October 2 to continue ongoing discussion on limited entry in the Northern shrimp fishery. New Hampshire will begin issuing shrimp licenses in 2014, making limited entry a potential management alternative for Northern Shrimp. The Section agreed that a common eligibility criterion should be determined for all three states. Although a majority of vessels (and licenses) fishing for Northern shrimp are based in Maine, it would be a challenging task to decide which individuals to eliminate and which to allow into the fishery. The other states may not have difficulty with this decision-making as their contribution to the fishery is smaller.

Eliminating just inactive permit holders will most likely not be sufficient to restore and sustain the fishery. The scoping document for limited entry outlined in Addendum 1 to Amendment 2 to the FMP provided a control date, June 7, 2011. The intention of the control date was to notify the public that new entrants to the fishery may be treated differently than those in the fishery prior to the control date. However, given the number of vessels which the fishery can accommodate, individuals who were in the fishery before the control date may also be affected. The Section discussed different ways to treat those individuals if eliminating new entrants and inactive permit holders was not sufficient to limit effort in the fishery.

The Section also discussed allocating the quota by state as another management option, leaving it in the hands of the individual states to decide how to deal with their own quota. Some fishermen hold licenses in more than one state. It is unknown how states would prevent fishermen from other states coming into their waters and harvesting the shrimp there. State quotas would create an additional level of complexity because of this possibility. The Section concurred that this alternative did not appear to be a feasible option.

The Section decided that further investigations and analysis are needed before any action is taken on limited entry. The Northern Shrimp Plan Development Team (PDT) was asked to determine how many vessels can fish in the fishery at a sustainable landing level of 3,000 and 4,000 metric tons. This analysis will investigate the trap and trawl fisheries separately, with a percentage of the landings (based on historical landings) attributed to the trap fishery, and the remainder attributed to the trawl fishery. This analysis will not be completed until sometime in early 2014 after the upcoming stock assessment and specifications setting process. The Section then will schedule work sessions to address other variables. The Section agreed that this process will not be complete by the next fishing season.

The section will remove the sentence in the Shrimp FMP that stated “Most trap fishermen fish in and around hard bottom coves and holes where mobile gear can’t reach” in a future mobile gear addendum because it does not accurately characterize the fishery.

HERRING CLOSURE

The directed fishery for Atlantic herring in Area 1A closed on October 15 and Area 3 closed on October 24. Vessels issued Federal Atlantic herring permits may not fish for, catch, possess or land more than 2,000 pounds (907.2 kg) of herring from Area 1A or Area 3 per trip or calendar day. On June 1, 2014, the quota for Area 1A for the 2014 Atlantic herring fishing year will become available and the directed fishery will re-open. The Area 3 herring quota for the 2014 herring fishing year will become available on January 1, 2014.

HEALTH INSURANCE ENROLLMENT

MLA’s Navigator, April Gilmore, held her first meeting on how to enroll in health insurance through the Marketplace. MLA was graciously hosted by the Chebeague Island Library and Chebeague Island Council on the island in late October. While the crowd was small, the attendees expressed much enthusiasm and interest about the Affordable Care Act and what it will mean for coastal communities. April provided an overview of the many changes that have gone into effect as a result of health care reform and stressed that her role is to help lobstermen and their families understand their health insurance options, ensure that their questions are answered and to guide them to find the health care plan that will best suit their needs, then assist with enrollment. If you want help with enrollment, you will need to complete an authorization disclosure form, located on the MLA Web site.

If you are anxious to get a preview of the types of plans and premiums available to you through the Health Insurance Marketplace, visit www.healthcare.gov/find-premium-essentials. These premiums are the "worst case scenario" because they do not reflect any subsidies for which you might qualify.

Be sure to check the calendar on the MLA website or at www.enroll207.com for a list of local meetings in order to get more information on the health care act.
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Dwight Carver, Beals

Bottom line: MLA has your back.

If you make your living in the lobster industry, there is no other organization that can provide this peace of mind, knowing that your best interests are always being looked out for.

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“I graduated from high school in 1973. I was a member then. And I don’t think I ever stopped. This is our business. You have to find out what is going on, and the MLA is a great way to do that.”

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THE ENTRY/EXIT RATIOS ARE WRONG

The limited entry system isn’t working. The trickle of new entrants simply isn’t to those who are on the waiting lists and want access to the fishery. Also, it is not sustainable for the fishery in the long run. Younger people are needed for infrastructure maintenance, buying old boats and traps, etc. Something, one way or another, has to be done. And for some sort of fix to be accepted and successful in this fishery, it needs to be simple.

The limited entry system isn’t the only issue facing the fishery. We’re hearing about whale rules, shell disease, latent effort, marketing, rising costs, bait supply. . . I’ll stop now. All those things are very important but the limited entry system problem boils down to two things: the lists are too long and they’re moving too slow. These can be fixed without any significant harm to the lobster resource itself or to current fishermen. Nobody likes the idea of more competition. However, the original intent of the limited entry law was not to have entry restricted to the level it is today. My opinion is simple: have the zones go back to using licenses, not tags, as the ratio currency. This will allow the lists to move quicker. Also, take a chunk of people off the list so they aren’t so long, perhaps the ones who would have gotten licenses since 2008 had the zones stayed using licenses as currency. A way to soften any impact might be to decrease the build-up rate from 100 traps a year to 50. If people look at the numbers of licenses and traps per zone and statewide this won’t have a significant impact. Yes, there will be a couple of new guys out there but there won’t be a whole new fleet steaming down the bay tomorrow morning.

Since 2008 when the exit ratio currency was changed from licenses to tags, the effective exit ratios for those on the waiting list have been Zone A: 5:1; Zone B 13:1; Zone D 15:1; Zone E 13:1; Zone F 14:1; and Zone G 17:1. (Editor’s note: the author calculated this 5-year average by dividing the total number of licenses retired over the 5-year period by the number of people who came off the waiting list. However, some individuals receive licenses each year whose names are not on the waiting lists. Former student license holders and returning military personnel. In addition, zone ratios are based on tags retired to reflect the actual effort on the water, rather than retired licenses, which may or may not be actively fished.)

These ratios are ridiculous. There ought to be some sort of ratcheting down mechanism, just about everyone agrees on that, but these ratios have gone too far. Current fishermen and zone council members ought to remember that when they started setting traps who- ever was fishing then didn’t want any more traps in the water either. I don’t intend any disrespect but part of me thinks it’s a shame that the limited entry ratios originally intended to ratchet down effort have been hijacked, voted and tweaked, for the purpose of limiting competition. People used to settle that out on the water, now people want to use rules, laws, and regulation andduck behind those to have the resource all to themselves. The rest of the country may be going in that direction but it’s a sad day when the Maine lobsterman, a real American icon, pulls the same card.

Ethan DeBery
PSHeburg

FROM THE DOCK Back off, PETA

Bean’s is an iconic Maine brand. It’s apple pie, campfires, gumboots and...lobster. When it comes to market- ing no one has used their brand name to advertise the industry like Linda Bean. With slogans such as “There is no such thing as a Maine lobster from away.” it’s hard to deny her contribution to branding our signature seafood. She buys, processes and sells lobster and all of her product is purchased exclusively from Maine, never from Canada. With a successful wholesale business, multiple restaurants and innovative ideas (lobstersticle anyone?) Linda Bean’s Perfect Maine Lobster has helped spread the word that our lobster is a delicious, high quality and sustainable choice. Not all lobstermen have always agreed with Linda Bean. She was a frontrunner in getting our industry certified by the Marine Stewardship Council, but we will be damned if someone else is going to mess with her. We have camaraderie in this industry and when the guy you dislike in your harbor breaks down, you tow him in anyway. The recent accusations against her processing facility by PETA are not only ridiculous but also attempt to make a mark on all of us. Lobster is vital to Maine’s economy and a large part of our identity. Standing together against PETA is the first issue I’ve seen every fisherman and industry member in the State agree on. It’s been very unity- ing. We have strong solidarity in this industry and I’m proud to be a part of it.

Genevieve McDonald
F/V Hello Darlin’
Stonington, Maine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tags Retired in Prior Year</th>
<th>Licenses Retired in Prior Year</th>
<th># off Waiting List</th>
<th>What it would have been using licenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>13,565</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>14,856 (13,731, 1,565)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>10,022 (9,586 + 436)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>9,312 (8,890 + 422)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>9,512 (7,400 + 2,112)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
They are only required to stop fishing once the TAC is reached by the smaller NGOM and IFQ vessels, which are fishing under dredge size restrictions and a 200-pound possession limit. Given the significant fishing power of DAS vessels and the patchy nature of the NGOM scallop resource, DAS vessels could theoretically eliminate all commercially viable beds before the 70,000 pound TAC were reached by the NGOM and IFQ boats, which is the only thing that would trigger a closure.

Representatives of the DAS boats claim this incongruity is no cause for concern since their members have no interest in fishing in the NGOM. Despite these assurances, however, they continue to oppose any attempts to correct the inconsistency. And even if their assurances are true now, things can change. This loophole puts the resource in the Gulf of Maine in jeopardy of being overharvested before it can be fully rebuilt. We must address these management oversights now before the proverbial horse leaves the barn and there is nothing left to protect.

In conversations over the past few years, numerous Maine scallop fishermen have suggested the resource is fully capable of recovering to a level that would attract the DAS boats. Many believe the resource is on its way to such a recovery, and they worry that once “word gets out,” the big boats will come and wipe out a resource that would otherwise have supported multiple boats for many years.

It is imperative that we correct this management loophole before that takes place. The correction will not be easy to achieve, but it will only get harder if we wait to attempt it. Scallop seed is increasingly present in surveys and even on lobster traps, and NGOM fishermen are landing more and more scallops from federal waters. If we correct it now, we’re correcting a problem many dismiss as “hypothetical.” If we wait until the resource blooms, we’ll be dealing with an actual source of landings defended by a very powerful group.

The location of the NGOM management area presents obvious advantages to Maine boats. Large boats are unlikely to bother with a fishery that allows only 200 pounds per trip. But contrary to lobster prices, scallop prices are high and on the rise, and 200 pounds at $10-$13 will keep many Maine boats fishing. A recovered NGOM scallop resource could provide year-round sustainable income to Maine fishermen. But that won’t happen unless this problem is addressed, and it won’t be fixed unless Maine fishermen make that demand.

At a recent Council meeting, “corrections to NGOM management inconsistencies” was included on a list of items considered for prioritization in 2014. But given the relative (un)importance of the NGOM, the Council is unlikely to take action, particularly if it is opposed by powerful lobbyists, unless Maine fishermen demand they do so. So far very few Maine fishermen have weighed in on this issue. That needs to change.

All too often, fishermen and fisheries managers are forced to be reactive rather than proactive. Fishermen often complain about what managers “should have done” rather than suggesting what they should do. Maine fishermen have an opportunity to be proactive: they can solve this problem before it wipes away an important opportunity.

Fishermen’s testimony is important at Council meetings and Maine’s Council representatives need to hear from those who are affected by their decisions. Maine fishermen need to start showing up to demand this risky inconsistency be corrected before we lose an important opportunity for Maine’s small-boat fleet.

The NGOM management area was created so that northern New England fishermen would not lose access to the federal scallop resource. It would be a terrible shame if faulty regulations enable the entire area to be wiped out before it can realize its purpose. Maine fishermen MUST act to prevent this from happening.

I will be working with the Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association to help solve this problem over the next few months and I’m inviting you to join us. If you’d like to find out how you can help, contact me at 207-838-1490 or Togue.brawn@gmail.com or contact Ben Martens, Director of the Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association at 207-619-1755.

Togue Brawn worked at the Department of Marine Resources from 2007-2011, where she spearheaded efforts to reform Maine’s state water scallop management. She currently owns Maine Dayboat Scallops, Inc, a business designed to increase the appreciation for and price of Maine scallops.

NEW AGREEMENT TO SHARE MSC CERTIFICATION COMPLETED

By Togue Brawn

Later this month, the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative will meet for the first time. Its goal is to develop a marketing campaign that will boost demand for Maine lobster. Part of its work will entail highlighting the sustainability of Maine lobster in ways that take advantage of current market trends.

Thanks to its recent certification by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Maine’s lobster industry is well positioned to take advantage of one of the seafood industry’s hottest trends: the increasing interest in and demand for certified sustainable seafood. Today’s consumers expect their seafood to be sustainable. They may not understand all the issues surrounding seafood sustainability, but they generally want “do no harm” to fisheries resources when making buying decisions. A logo that can quickly convey a product is a responsible, sustainable choice can offer advantages in the marketplace.

And although many organizations offer such logos, the MSC eco-label is by far the most recognized and respected designation in the U.S. and around the world.

The quest for MSC certification began six years ago when a small group of Maine lobster processors noticed the rising demand for sustainable seafood. Although many of their customers were seeking sustainable products, few buyers realized that Maine’s lobster resource was thriving and had been sustainably harvested for generations. These processors, led by John Hathaway of Shucks Maine Lobster and Linda Bean of Linda Bean’s Perfect Maine, formed a client group called the Fund for the Advancement of Sustainable Maine Lobster to take initial steps toward MSC certification. Fund chairman Hathaway’s premise was that to develop an economically sustainable business model, the industry needed to start with a foundation of a certified sustainable resource.

Because MSC certification could impact everyone involved in Maine’s lobster fishery, industry feedback was sought before going too far. At meetings held up and down the coast, Hathaway explained that proven sustainability was on the way to becoming a requirement in many markets, and he wanted to make sure Maine’s lobster industry was able to capitalize on the sustainable fishing practices many Mainers took for granted. Although the industry generally offered cautious support, some important concerns were raised. In response, Hathaway made two promises.

The first was that if Maine’s lobster industry was cast in an unfavorable light at any point during the assessment period, the certification process would immediately be cancelled. The second promise was that neither lobstermen nor Maine taxpayers would be required to pay for any certification expenses. To provide further reassurance, an industry advisory board was created to ensure that industry’s concerns were heard throughout the certification process.

MSC Certification of Sustainability’s value comes partly from the fact that it’s the strictest standard in the world and is not easy to achieve. In the case

Continued on page 23
By Amanda LaBelle

In October, news outlets in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia reported sightings of a total of five North Atlantic right whales in the Bay of Fundy this summer. In previous years, sum-
mer counts have hovered closer to 100 whales in the Bay of Fundy, with numbers peaking in August and Sep-
tember. The endangered right whales use the Bay to feed and to nurse their young before returning to their calv-
ing grounds off the southeastern coast of the United States for the win-
ter months.

This year’s count is the lowest in the 34 years that researchers have been monitoring right whales in the bay, but scientists are not suggesting that these unprecedentedly low numbers signal any similarly drastic drop in the population of the species. Rather, census estimates suggest North At-
lantic right whales are doing well. Estimates put the right whale popu-
lation somewhere over 500 whales, showing a steady increase from a 2000 estimate of just 300 whales. While it is not yet entirely clear where exactly the whales ventured off to this summer, researchers from the New England Aquarium hypothesize that the drop in whale sightings in the Bay of Fundy may be tied to changes in food availability leading the whales to seek new feeding grounds.

Right whales feast primarily on cope-
pods known as Calanus finmarchicus. These tiny critters are little bundles of fat, providing the energy source right whales need to sustain good health and ensure reproductive capability. The most efficient way for the whales to obtain the tiny copepods in sufficient quantities is by feeding in areas where they can be found in densely-concentrated patches. However, at the annual science meeting of the Regional Association for Research on the Gulf of Maine (RARGOM) in October, Heather Koopman, research biologist at the Grand Manan Whale and Seabird Research Station and associate professor at the University of North Carolina, reported finding very low abundance of overwintering Calanus finmarchicus this past Sep-
tember at her sampling station near Grand Manan Island. The low density of the copepods coupled with hardly any right whale sightings in the Bay has researchers wondering if the whales headed elsewhere this summer in search of more suitable feeding grounds.

This would not be the first time right whales have shifted their migratory patterns based on food availability. Right whales became similarly scarce in the Great South Channel, the deep channel that stretches between Nantucket and Georges Bank, from 1992 to 1998, apparently in response to food availability, according to the New England Aquarium.

What does a diminished population of the right whales’ preferred food in the Bay of Fundy mean? “The low numbers of Calanus finmarchicus in the Bay of Fundy raise concern, as it is thought that Calanus finmarchicus in the Bay of Fundy are the source of production supplying Calanus finmarchicus in Wilkinson Basin”, Jeffrey Runge, research scientist at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute and University of Maine’s School of Marine Sciences explained. “Low abundances in the Bay of Fundy may ultimately indicate low abundances in the Gulf of Maine. The implica-
tions for right whales may be lower calf production and redistribution to places like the waters off Nova Scotia where they can find more prey.”

Moira Brown, a senior scientist with the New England Aquarium and the Canadian Whale Institute, wrote in an email, “Whales feeding elsewhere means that we are not able to moni-
tor the population annually as we have been doing in the Bay of Fundy, which means we lose monitoring data on reproduction, scarring rates and, health assessment.”

Runge reported that normal, high abundances of overwintering cope-
pods were found in Wilkinson Basin in 2012, but sampling ended due to lack of funding, so there are no 2013 data on the abundance of Calanus finmarchicus. The Wilkinson Basin sampling data are used as a proxy measure for the health of Calanus finmarchicus populations in the entire Gulf of Maine. Researchers recognize that changes to the temperature of seawater as well as altered wind and current patterns can affect forma-
tion of the dense copepod patches. Other species that feed on Calanus finmarchicus that could be affected by changes in its distribution include cod, haddock, herring, and mackerel. So what’s the next strategy for col-
lecting survey data on the whales if they don’t return to the Bay of Fundy? For now, fishermen and oth-
ers working on the water are being asked to keep their eyes open. Brown writes, “We worked this year on collecting opportunistic sight-
ings from fishermen and fisheries surveillance in Canada. If the Bay of Fundy continues to be rather devoid of right whales next summer we will look further afield based on reports from other eyes on the water,” Brown noted.

SO YOU WANT TO KNOW: Where have the Bay of Fundy whales gone?

Present your MLA membership card at the following businesses and receive generous discounts!
October has been quite eventful! The Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare, is still rolling out. While a hard line remains between the two parties in Washington, implementation of the health care law is moving forward. This law will impact the many Mainers who do not have health insurance or carry catastrophic plans. A study done by Gulf of Maine Research Institute in 2006 found that nearly 40% of Maine lobstermen did not have health insurance. And 25% of lobstermen’s households had no health insurance at all. And it’s not because you don’t want insurance, but rather because it’s been too expensive. The result is that hardworking people put off seeking medical treatment because heading through the doctor’s door could mean walking out with an empty wallet. Commercial fishing is one of the most dangerous job out there. Your body and well-being are the vehicle to your paycheck. Without good health, you’re not working. And if you’re not working, you’re not earning money. That’s why the MLA has stepped up to help lobstermen and their families understand their options under health care reform. For some, the ACA provides an opportunity to buy affordable health insurance coverage. Through my role as a Navigator, I am here to help you understand the options available to you and if you are interested, to help you enroll.

It is very important to consider what your penalty might be for not buying health insurance. If you don’t purchase a qualified health insurance plan by March 31, 2014, you could be subject to a penalty. There are some exemptions from the penalty based on certain situations. The maximum penalty is 1% of your household income. So if you make $50,000 in 2014, you’re looking at a $500 penalty at tax time. The IRS will receive notification whether or not you purchased health insurance coverage by the deadline.

There is a lot of information for you to be aware of in order to understand what health care reform will mean for you, and to understand the types of plans and premiums being offered. The MLA will be holding a series of information meetings around the coast, so be sure to check the calendar or call the office to find out more information.

There are a few important things that you should be thinking about now. If you buy health insurance through the Marketplace (www.healthcare.gov), you may qualify for subsidized premiums known as Premium Tax Credits. These are based on your income level and could lower your monthly health insurance premium. For example, individuals earning between $11,000 and $45,000, or a family of six with a household income of between $31,000 and $126,000 could qualify.

All plans offered through the Marketplace must cover ten Essential Health Benefits (EHBs). These include things such as emergency services; hospitalization; maternity and newborn care; mental health and substance use disorder services. If you choose to buy your health insurance somewhere other than through the Marketplace, make sure the plan covers all the EHBs or else it will not qualify under the ACA and you could be subject to the penalty.

If you want to get started and look at health insurance options available to you through the Marketplace, you’ll want to pull together information about your household and your income. You can use your most recent tax return to estimate your income. Of course, this is a challenge for fishermen because your income can fluctuate so much from year to year, and there are always unforeseen expenses that come from owning a business with high operating costs. The estimate of your income could affect whether or not you qualify for a subsidy. When all is said and done, if you make more than estimated, you simply pay back the subsidy you received when you file your taxes. And if you make less than what you estimated, you may receive the subsidy when you file your taxes or your premiums can be adjusted so you will pay less each month.

As you get ready to choose a health insurance plan, it is important to be aware of your current medical network of providers and think about your needs. Ask questions like “can I keep my current doctor in this network?” or “will this plan cover the prescriptions I need?” Then you can make sure that you choose a plan that is a good fit for you.

Also be aware of fraud. There are a number of websites out there that are not official, but look similar to Healthcare.gov. For example, HealthCare.com is NOT the same as healthcare.gov. You will also never receive a cold call from a Navigator asking you for personal information, you will only be contacted if you ask to be contacted. Navigators will not ask for your personal information over the phone unless you have signed a consent form. If someone calls asking for your personal information, try and take down as much information about who the caller is and report it immediately to the Maine Bureau of Insurance at 1-800-300-5000, the US Department of Health and Human Services at 1-800-HHS-TIPS, or Federal Trade Commission at 1-877-382-4357.

While you are probably finding this information a bit overwhelming, you still have time to look to see if plans offered through the Health Insurance Marketplace are a good fit for you. The final deadline to enroll is March 31, 2014 which is still five months away. I urge you to be proactive and learn about the different types of health insurance coverage available. Through the Marketplace you can see your options for insurance plans that can give you the right balance of costs and coverage. If you are not comfortable using the computer to visit the Marketplace Web site, that’s alright. As a Navigator, I can help you look into plans on the Marketplace, help you with an online application or look into the option for a paper application. The Marketplace Call Center is also available 24/7 at 1-800-318-2596; TTY: 1-855-889-4325.
Futures contracts present financial possibilities

By Melissa Waterman

Selling something is a fairly straightforward activity, or so it seems. I have an apple, you want my apple, you give me money or something of value for that apple, and voila! A sale.

But what happens if you anticipate wanting my apple several months in the future? How can I, the seller, predict what my cost will be for growing those apples when the appointed time comes to sell them to you? How can you, the buyer, be assured of the apple’s quality in the future, since they don’t exist right now?

That’s where a futures contract comes in. A futures contract is designed to minimize the risk to both parties inherent in a sale taking place at some specific time in the future. Through the contract, the parties lay out in detail what the product is, the amount to be purchased, when it is to be purchased, and when it is to be delivered. A futures contract for a given item, such as corn or metals, is traded on an exchange, allowing both the buyer and the seller to “hedge their bets” in a future that neither can entirely predict. They have been used to sell commodities in the United States since they were first introduced at the Chicago Board of Trade in 1865.

Futures contracts for seafood, however, are still a rarity, at least in the United States. Futures contracts are used in Norway, for salmon, and in Japan, for shrimp.

Fish Pool ASA is an international commodity exchange based in Bergen, Norway. In 2007 it created futures contracts for Norwegian farmed salmon. Those futures contracts were designed to provide predictability in a market prone to rapid price fluctuation and thus, to better manage risk on both sides of the transaction. By 2012 Fish Pool had more than 200 members representing the entire Norwegian salmon industry, including salmon farmers, exporters, importers, processors and financial investors.

Across the globe in Osaka, Japan, the Kansai Commodities Exchange began trading futures contracts in frozen shrimp in 2002. The exchange also offers futures trading in other commodities such as soybeans, azuki beans, raw sugar and raw silk. Futures trading in seafood landed in Osaka, Japan, by 2011.

In the United States futures contracts in shrimp were traded for seven years during the 1990s at the Minneapolis Grain Exchange. The exchange halted shrimp futures in 2000 due to low trading volume. It appeared that there was not a large cash market for shrimp at that time on the United States and certainly not in Minnesota. In addition, standardizing the product that was to be delivered proved difficult. Shrimp come in many sizes. A buyer might get the right quantity of shrimp delivered at the right time but in a variety of sizes, some of which he could not use.

Penalties for failing to meet the requirements of the contract were not strong enough to correct the problem and trading eventually fell off.

As a recent paper on futures contracts in seafood by Nicholas Boston, a University of Maine law student, published in the Ocean and Coastal Law Journal (Vol. 18:2) noted, “Fishermen... have no ownership right to the ocean, have a catch-share right to a certain amount of seafood, and have a less predictable amount and quality of final product as a result of having to actually capture fish.” Boston goes on to say that despite those obstacles, “Seafood futures contracts possess the potential to revolutionize the fishing business from a business that is at the mercy of the ebb and flow of price movements, to a business in which fishermen can lock in profitability before leaving the dock. Futures contracts not only provide an alternative to the cash market, but they also allow producers to reduce their price change risk.”

So what do Maine fishermen have to say about futures contracts? Port Clyde Fresh Catch prides itself on getting fresh fish, lobster and shrimp directly to its buyers with no middleman involved. As its Web site notes concerning wholesale orders, “If you are about to order seafood from Port Clyde Fresh Catch, your order is swimming somewhere in the Gulf of Maine right now!” Which sounds a lot like a futures contract for seafood. But, according to Gary Libby, managing director and COO of Fish Pool, a futures pool is “not a hedger of the company, that’s not quite the case.

While the fishermen who sell to Port Clyde Fresh Catch fish in order to meet customers’ orders, the volume of seafood landed in any one week from the catch to construct futures contracts, Libby said, “We’re just not big enough to do those contracts. We’ve had some good-sized orders, couple of thousand pounds each [for fish] and we can’t get it from our boats, we go to the auction [Portland Fish Exchange].”

He acknowledges that there is a benefit to fishermen to have the ultimate price for their fish or lobster locked in before they head out to sea. Getting the price right, however, is tricky. The company bases its prices on those set at the Fish Exchange. But if a contract is set on a Monday, based on that day’s price, for delivery a week later, the price could have gone up or down in the meantime. “It can cut both ways,” Libby said, referring to the contract’s possible benefit to fishermen.

The other obstacle, Libby said, was a lack of preplanning on the part of the customers. “We don’t get orders until about 12 hours before the customer wants it, if we’re lucky. Like yesterday, I had a call at 5 p.m. for crab meat and frozen lobster product. They asked me if I could have it ready by 11:30 a.m. today. Not likely,” he said. Many of his customers are involved in the tourism business and so place orders in relation to the ups and downs of that industry. “They sort of wing it,” Libby admitted. “If it’s a rainy week, let’s say, then they buy less.”

Groundfishermen seem to be discussing futures contracts more these days than they did several years ago, according to Ben Martens, director of the Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association. As groundfishing settles into a catch share allocation system, locking in a buyer for fewer but higher quality fish becomes even more important. “They are definitely talking about it a lot but no one’s jumped in yet,” he said. That hesitancy is in part due to the fact that fishermen understand the existing system of sales very well. That said, the companies that buy product from them are invested in the status quo and must be persuaded that a change to futures contracts could substantially benefit them. “Plus fishermen are struggling right now and so are investing in other aspects of the business,” Martens added. “Still if it could stabilize pricing in the market it would be very appealing.”

Open Ocean Trading, an online seafood exchange, on the other hand, has found Maine groundfishermen and lobstermen willing to try this different way of moving their harvest. Open Ocean Trading features an exchange for forward contracts, rather than futures contracts, for lobster, groundfish, scallops and other seafood. Forward contracts are slightly more flexible than futures contracts. They are customizable, individualized contracts between the parties that must result in an instrument or asset being delivered, according to Nicholas Boston. “We line up buyers for the product,” Keith Flett, president of Open Ocean Trading, explain. “The exchange fosters price transparency and price stability.” Since the lobster forward contract exchange opened in July, Flett has traveled frequently along the Maine coast engaging lobstermen and buying stations in this new selling platform. He’s found the climate very favorable. “I have an oversupply of product at this point,” he said. “I’m still looking for more buyers.” One large purchaser of lobster for the restaurant trade is now a member of the exchange; a second, equally large company is watching the exchange closely.

“I would say the education curve [about forward contracts] is down in terms of lobstermen and end users [the buyers],” he said. “They completely understand what we are doing.” Flett said. “The resistance is coming from the middlemen, those with power to set the current price.”
Fall Trade Shows in Hong Kong, China and Korea

Lobster exporters from Maine registered to exhibit at three fall Asian seafood shows: the Asian Seafood Exposition held in Hong Kong during September; the China Fisheries and Seafood Expo in early November; and the Busan, South Korea, International Seafood Expo occurring later that month. Food Export-Northeast offers cost-share assistance funding to help defray company participation and travel expenses for these events and also provides exhibitor services through its Food Show PLUS! program. Services may vary by show but typically include: market briefings/tours; trained interpreters; translation of company profiles; and pre-arranged meetings with qualified buyers.

Technical Seminars in Macau and China

Education is essential for creating awareness of American lobster and lobster products. Food Export-Northeast conducts technical seminars for importers and training seminars incorporating cooking demonstrations for chefs. Seminars cover geographic distribution and harvests; fishery management practices and sustainability; and handling practices and product forms. Thus product preparation and tastings are important components of the chef training seminars. Technical seminars are often scheduled to piggyback onto trade shows so that we can draw on the presence of lobster exporters to serve as technical presenters and industry ambassadors. John Norton, of Cozy Harbor Seafood, and Tom Adams, of Maine Coast Shellfish, participated in a recent chef training seminar we conducted in Macau, just after the Asian Seafood Exposition. And technical seminars for importers and chefs in Guangzhou, China, were held just after the China Fisheries and Seafood Expo.

Lobster Promotions in France, Poland, Malaysia, China, South Korea

Food Export-Northeast uses USDA Foreign Agricultural Service Market Access Program (MAP) funding to conduct promotional activities in order to create and boost demand for seafood products from the northeastern U.S. Activities are conducted on behalf of the seafood industry for seafood products from the northeastern U.S. Activities are conducted on behalf of the seafood industry. Lobsterman and other commercial fishermen can count on Scania for the power they need, when they need it. Scania engines are built to meet the most exacting standards for outstanding performance, extraordinary fuel economy and extended service intervals.

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Lobster Promotions in France, Poland, Malaysia, China, South Korea

Food Export-Northeast uses USDA Foreign Agricultural Service Market Access Program (MAP) funding to conduct promotional activities in order to create and boost demand for seafood products from the northeastern U.S. Activities are conducted on behalf of the seafood industry without cost to harvesters or shore-side firms. Menu promotions, retail promotions and high-profile media events showcasing lobster are taking place this autumn in France, Poland, Malaysia, China and South Korea.

A retail promotion conducted during September with BHG Market Place in Beijing, China, is an example of how product promotions can spur consumer awareness and demand for lobster. BHG Market Place is a high-end supermarket catering to foreigners and local customers who desire a high-quality product selection and shopping experience. Food Export-Northeast partnered with BHG’s 12 Beijing units to promote lobster, Atlantic sea scallops and redfish during the mid-autumn festival and running up to the China’s annual National Day.

By Colleen Coyne

Food Export USA-Northeast is a non-profit organization composed of state agricultural promotion agencies which uses federal, state, and industry resources to help food producers increase product sales overseas. Food Export-Northeast is funded by the Market Access Program of the Foreign Agricultural Service of the USDA.

One of Food Export-Northeast’s major activities is its Branded Program. Through the program, cost-share assistance funding is made available to Maine lobster companies to defray their own foreign market promotion costs. The organization is also known for the many sales opportunities provided directly to Maine lobster companies through activities such as buyers missions, trade shows and trade missions. Less known, however, are the education initiatives and promotions that are conducted in order to create and boost demand for seafood products from the northeastern U.S. Activities are conducted in order to create and boost demand for seafood products from the northeastern U.S. Activities are conducted on behalf of the seafood industry.

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Colleen Coyne is the Seafood Program Coordinator at Food Export USA-Northeast. She is based in Hope Valley, Rhode Island.

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The exchange was entitled “The 2013 Terroir Tour de France” and ran from September 29 to October 4. “Terroir” is the French word that encompasses the elements of geographic area, soil, climate, history and farming or fishing techniques that are associated with products from particular French regions.

In addition to Joyce, who represented the Maine Lobstermen’s Association, the American delegation included producers of Idaho potatoes, Vermont maple syrup, Hawaii Kona coffee, New Mexico native chiles, and Wisconsin ginseng. Each delegate’s organization is affiliated with the American Origin Products Association (AOPA), an umbrella organization that provides a national voice for regional agricultural products.

The Americans met with their counterparts from France, producers of that country’s many renowned regional products, including Champagne, Comité cheese, Bresse chicken, Grenoble walnuts, Jura wines, and Vosges fir-tree honey. Also participating were representatives of various local, regional, and national governmental agencies, including the chief of the International Department of the French Agriculture Ministry.

Joyce and his colleagues saw for themselves the dedication of French farmers to traditional methods of production and to the quality of their products. The Americans were also impressed by the active support from governmental agencies at all levels in promoting French regional products throughout the world and in protecting those products from counterfeit and deceptive labeling by competitors in France and abroad. One representative noted that “even for a small-scale specialty product like Vosges fir-tree honey, governmental agencies provided active assistance in putting a stop to the marketing of counterfeit honey from Poland.”

The French, in turn, were surprised by the meager support given by U.S. federal agencies for American regional products. “The French government protects the local farmer’s or fisherman’s good name and product from being misrepresented worldwide very seriously and aggressively,” Joyce commented. He and other lobstermen are concerned that such care hasn’t been taken in the U.S., other than by individual businesses.

“Maine lobster was recognized by all the Frenchmen I met as a name representing the very best lobster and of the highest quality, a name to be proud of.”

The exchange highlighted the fact that in both countries French and American farmers and fishermen share a commitment to protect the regional heritage and identity of specialty products and shellfish. It also pointed out the extent to which American producers and federal agencies can learn from France and other European countries about better ways to support regionally distinctive products. The American Origin Products Association (AOPA) continues to work with producers and producer groups across the U.S. with products closely tied to their region of origin. More information can be found at www.aop-us.org.
Day holiday. The promotion was publicized to consumers through advertisements in local newspapers and in national consumer magazines. BHG's flagship store launched the promotion effort with a highly publicized media ceremony and media tasting reception. An opening species to be showcased. An opening flagship store launched the promotion effort with a highly publicized media ceremony and media tasting reception. An opening ceremony and media tasting reception will launch promotion efforts at a retail promotion with the Metro company in Shanghai. Chef semi-nars, trader receptions, and menu promotions will take place over the next three months in Beijing, Guangzhou, Chengdu and Shenyang. Visit www.foodexport.org to learn more and take advantage of all Food Export-Northeast has to offer. New- to-export companies, or companies considering export, should consider attending the upcoming "Prepare for Export Success" seminar. This free seminar for New Hampshire and Maine food companies is scheduled for November 14, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

2014 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

The Maine Fishermen's Forum Board of Directors offers a scholarship fund to benefit immediate family members (son/daughter, or a grandson/granddaughter) or legal dependent of someone actively involved in Maine's seafood industry, regardless of financial need or academic achievement. Undergraduates attending a two or four year college who are in at least the second year of their program or students who are in at least the second semester of their Certificate Program will be eligible. Applications will be accepted through February 25, 2014. Scholarships will be awarded by a random drawing to be held during the 39th annual Maine Fishermen's Forum. Please note that previous winners are not eligible.

Do you qualify? Check all that apply:
☐ Are you a sophomore, junior, or senior right now? You must be at least a sophomore in college to apply.
☐ Do you have an immediate family member actively participating in Maine's seafood industry?

What do you need to apply? Check all that apply:
☐ Complete the following application & send to the address at the top.
☐ Provide an official transcript or Registrar's letter of current standing along with this application.

You qualify for the scholarship only if you checked all 4 of the boxes above.

STUDENT INFORMATION

Student Name___________________________________________

Street/Mailing Address___________________________________________

City ____________________ State __________ Zip __________

Home Phone________________________

Email___________________________________________

SCHOOL INFORMATION

College/University name________________________

Location of college________________________

Expected year of graduation ________ your major ________

College standing as of Sept 2013 (circle one)

Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

MAINE SEAFOOD INDUSTRY FAMILY MEMBER INFORMATION

Name___________________________________________

Relationship___________________________________________

Street/Mailing Address___________________________________________

City ____________________ State __________ Zip __________ Email________________________

Home Phone________________________

Vessel Name or Commercial License Number________________________

Describe Participation in the Maine seafood industry________________________
STATOIL LEAVES MAINE BEHIND

Norwegian company Statoil announced in October that it was withdrawing from Maine and cancelling its $120 million offshore wind pilot project, citing uncertainty about state regulations. It will instead put its resources toward pursuing an offshore wind project it has been developing in Scotland.

In June, at the behest of Governor LePage, the Legislature passed a law that forced the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to delay negotiations on a contract with Statoil and reopen the request for proposals process it closed in 2011. The Governor had long opposed the Statoil project, vetoing an omnibus energy bill that lawmakers worked on for most of the legislative session, then withholding his support until the Legislature passed the law.

With the PUC proposal process reopened, UMaine formed a for-profit company called Maine Prime Technologies. The company joined with Cianbro and Emera, the owner of Bangor Hydro Electric Power Co., to form another company called Maine Aqua Ventus GP LLC, which submitted a proposal to the PUC on August 30.

SEAHAG FOUNDER HONORED

The Hitachi Foundation in October recognized Kyle Murdock, 23, founder of Sea Hag Seafood in St. George, as one of its Yoshiyama Young Entrepreneurs, an award which recognizes young business owners who are “operating viable businesses that fill needs in the market while creating social value and tangible opportunities for low-wealth Americans.” Murdock will receive an award of $40,000 and consulting assistance to build his business in the future. He is one of eight entrepreneurs from five businesses that received the recognition.

State law was changed so that a sternman may sell only to a licensed lobster dealer or retail license holder and must provide them the name and license number of their captain. A sternman can’t sell to the public. Cash sales must be accompanied by a receipt that also includes the name and license number of the captain. The dealer or retail license holder who buys the lobsters must report the information provided by the sternman to the Department of Marine Resources, as required under existing landings regulations.

The expectation is that this process will ensure that all landings information is being properly attributed to the licensed lobsterman. Accurate and timely reporting ensures that fisheries managers have the most accurate information about the lobster population for management decisions.

LEGISLATIVE CHANGE TO IMPROVE ACCURACY OF LOBSTER DATA

New legislation that went into effect in October clarifies the conditions under which sternmen may sell lobsters harvested by their captains. This legislation was passed to ensure that lobster landings are attributed to the harvester who is licensed to catch them while also preventing any impact on long-standing arrangements under which crew are compensated with a portion of the catch.

MAINE MARITIME ACADEMY RECEIVES LARGEST-EVER RESEARCH GRANT

The Maine Maritime Academy (MMA) in Castine has been awarded a $1.4 million research grant to study and develop environmentally savvy fuel for commercial ships. The school was one of 33 schools that conduct research on transportation technology to receive this grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The grant will fund MMA’s efforts to build a Marine Engine Testing and Emissions Laboratory, where researchers will study how to make more efficient fuel that emits fewer toxins into the air for commercial fishing and shipping vessels. The laboratory will be housed in MMA’s ABS Center for Engineering, Science and Research, construction of which is expected to begin in the spring and be ready for use in the fall of 2015.
November 4
Affordable Care Act and Marketplace Information, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Rice Public Library, Kittery Town Hall, FMI: Robin Hewitt Bibber (Robin.Bibber@yccac.org).

November 6-7

November 7
Enrolling in the Health Insurance Marketplace, 500-780 p.m., Ellsworth City Hall Auditorium. FMI: contact MLA at 967-4555 or april@mainelobstemen.org.

November 9

November 12
University of Maine ocean wind turbine meeting, 6-8 p.m., Friendship Town Office. Narraguagus High School.

"Understanding The Affordable Care Act," 5-6 p.m. Limited seating. Reserve a space by contacting Susie. beal@harringtonfamilyhealth.org or calling 483-4502, x 233.

November 13
Questions and Answers about the ACA , 140-2:30 p.m., Goodall Memorial Library, Sanford. FMI: Robin Bibber, 439-2989 or Celyn Reed, 608-4466, or Robin.Bibber@yccac.org.

MLA directors' meeting, 5 p.m., Darby's restaurant, Belfast.

Questions and Answers about the ACA and Marketplace, 6:30-8:00 PM, South Berwick Public Library. FMI: contact Robin Hewitt Bibber (Robin.Bibber@yccac.org).

November 14
Enrolling in the Health Insurance Marketplace, 5:00-7:00 p.m., Scarborough City Hall, Chambers Room A, Scarborough Municipal Building. FMI: contact MLA at 967-4555 or april@mainelobstemen.org.

University of Maine ocean wind turbine meeting, 6-8 p.m., Bristol Consolidated School.

November 16
Questions and Answers about the ACA and Marketplace, 10:30-11:30 a.m., Wells Public Library. FMI: contact Robin.Bibber@yccac.org.

November 19
Enrolling in the Health Insurance Marketplace, 5:00-7:00 p.m., Oceanside High School, cafeteria, Rockland. FMI: 967-4555 or april@mainelobstemen.org.

November 21
Questions and Answers about the ACA and Marketplace, 6-7:30 p.m., Wells Public Library, FMI: contact Robin.Bibber@yccac.org.

University of Maine ocean wind turbine meeting, 6-8 p.m., Herring Gut Learning Center, Port Clyde.

UPCOMING
December 2
Enrolling in the Health Insurance Marketplace, 5-7 p.m., Yarmouth Log Cabin. FMI: 967-4555 or april@mainelobstemen.org.

December 3
MLA board of directors' meeting, 5 p.m., Darby's restaurant, Belfast.

December 11
Enrolling in the Health Insurance Marketplace, 5:00-7:00 p.m., Belfast Free Library. FMI: 967-4555 or april@mainelobstemen.org.

Combining Fisheries and Tourism, Maine Sea Grant, Belfast. FMI: 207.563.8186.

December 12
Combining Fisheries and Tourism, Maine Sea Grant, Machias. FMI: 207.563.8186.

December 13
Combining Fisheries and Tourism, Maine Sea Grant, Portland. FMI: 207.563.8186.

December 16
DMR & Maine Sea Grant Green Crab Summit, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Wells Conference Center, Orono. FMI: https://seagrant.umaine.edu/green-crab-summit

December 17
Enrolling in the Health Insurance Marketplace, 5:00-7:00 p.m., Vinalhaven Town Office. FMI: contact MLA at 967-4555 or april@mainelobstemen.org.

Research in the new laboratory will focus on helping the marine industry further comply with federal regulations, as well as a set of regulations adopted at the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, which was held in 1973 with the aim of reducing ocean pollution. This grant will give MMA the capital it needs to invest in equipment for testing emissions from diesel engines on and off shore. It is a two-year grant, so if all goes well, MMA will receive additional funds from the Department of Transportation next year.

MSC continued from page 25
of Maine's lobster fishery, certification took over six years of research, analysis, and advocacy. But that work paid off earlier this year when the Maine lobster trap fishery was finally awarded MSC certification. The Fund chose to certify the entire Maine lobster fishery rather than focusing on a portion of it. This means that, any lobster landed by a Maine licensed lobsterman fishing in LCMA 1 is eligible to carry the MSC eco-label. But due to strict requirements that mandate that each lobster can be traced back to the vessel, lobster must enter the MSC "chain of custody" at the first point of sale. Chain of custody is verified by independent auditors who review business practices and ensure that what's claimed to be Maine lobster is, in fact, Maine lobster. For instance if a dealer buys both Maine lobster and Canadian lobster, he must be able to show how he segregates it to ensure that only Maine lobster carries the MSC certification.

In addition to facilitating traceability, this provision enables costs to be equitably shared among companies that wish to use the MSC Eco-label. At the time of initial certification, only the original client group members were eligible to initiate chain of custody, which meant that only the vessels that sold to those businesses could be said to land MSC-certified lobster. In October, a mechanism was established to share the MSC certification with businesses outside of the original client group.

"We promised harvesters wouldn't have to pay for this, and we meant it," said Hathaway. "This licensing agreement allows us to share the costs of certification and research among only those dealer and processors who want to use the eco-label. It's voluntary."

Licensing costs for dealers, processors and even retailers will be scaled depending on the size of each business. Businesses will also need to become chain-of-custody-certified, an integral part of the MSC traceability requirements. Hathaway believes this traceability will prove as important, if not more important, than the proven sustainability the MSC eco-label provides. "Maine lobstermen provide a superior product, and the one-man, one-boat story is a great marketing message. These traceability requirements will help combat the 'imposter lobster' fraudulently advertised as Maine lobster which only weakens our Maine brand."

MSC certification took a lot of time and effort to achieve, but Maine's lobster industry now has an internationally recognized symbol of its sustainability. Not all consumers will pay more for sustainable seafood, but the percentage of them who are doing so is on the rise. At the Boston Seafood Show last year, generic claims of sustainability were everywhere. But few of those claims could be backed up with anything other than salesmen hype. Not so with Maine lobster; thanks to its internationally respected MSC certification, Maine's industry can prove it is a sustainable, responsible choice.

Today, MSC certification is a necessity for many companies, which is why Canadian fisheries have begun to pursue it. Maine lobster already has it.

Maine's lobster industry is well positioned to take advantage of the increasing demand for sustainable seafood. Now it's up to Maine lobster dealers and processors to fully capitalize on the advantages MSC certification offers. Anyone interested in becoming licensed should call John Hathaway at (207) 329-1791 or e-mail him at Johnny@ShucksMaineLobster.com.
This article was first published in The Chronicle Herald on October 23. Reprinted with permission.

A number of industry sectors in Nova Scotia are poised to benefit from a free trade agreement with the European Union, officials said Wednesday. At a media event at the Seaport Farmers’ Market in Halifax, Ed Fast, the federal minister of international trade, said the fishery, forestry and agriculture sectors will benefit from the Port of Halifax’s relative proximity to the continent.

"The Vancouver port has significant capacity issues," said Fast, the MP for Abbotsford, B.C. "You have the advantage here in Halifax of having ready, easily available capacity so we can get moving to expanding our trade with the European Union."

Fast’s visit came a week after an agreement in principle was reached on the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with the European Union. The EU is Nova Scotia’s second-largest trading partner. Nova Scotia has" annually in fish and seafood products exported, on average, $142.6 million export with the remaining tariff s gone after seven years.

By Remo Zaccagna

"This is no insignificant sum we're talking about, and there are prospects of us being able to double and even do more than that," Fast said. When asked after the event what his statement about Nova Scotia fish and seafood exports doubling was based on, Fast said the remark was "aspirational" in nature. "I don't think it's unrealistic to expect that there would be a very significant increase in fish and seafood exports to the EU," he said.

Halifax Mayor Mike Savage said the deal "holds great potential" for the fish and seafood sector. "Similarly, it holds new potential for our growing ocean science sector, with new potential to access European investors and markets and opportunities for IT companies as well," he said.

Government figures show that EU tariffs as high as 20 per cent for processed lobster and cooked-and-peeled shrimp would be eliminated under the agreement. Almost 90 per cent of tariffs on fish and seafood products would be eliminated the day the agreement goes into effect, with the remaining tariffs gone after seven years.

In all, Fast said, almost 9,000 EU tariff lines will be eliminated under the agreement, translating into increased profits and market opportunities for businesses of all sizes in every part of the country.

Karen Oldfield, president and CEO of the Port of Halifax, said there are 16 shipping lines that link the port to every EU member country. "In Halifax, the closest deep-water North American port to northern Europe, we are very, very well-positioned to facilitate the increase in trade that this landmark agreement will bring," she said.

Regional agriculture exports are also expected to increase, Oldfield said. She gave the example of soybeans trucked in from New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island to the Halifax Grain Elevator, with some transported to shipping containers. "Shipping containers protect the quality of the product," she said. "So by exporting those soybeans as containerized cargo instead of bulk cargo, the producer here in Atlantic Canada can sell those soybeans overseas as food-grade instead of feed-grade product, and that commands a higher price and that means jobs."

Fast downplayed criticism of the agreement. "Certainly with the dairy industry, as you know, we have achieved unfettered access to the EU market for our dairy producers," he said. "In return, we've provided for some marginal additional access for European cheese into our market, for which we're discussing some compensation. We're having productive discussions with the provinces and the producers on that, so we believe we have achieved that balanced outcome that we were aiming for."

Fast said the deal will take up to two years to be officially ratified by parliaments on both sides of the Atlantic before it comes into effect.

On October 18, 2013, EU and Canada reached a political agreement on the key elements of a trade agreement (CETA). The agreement will remove over 99% of tariffs between the two economies and create sizeable new market access opportunities in services and investment. In 2012 Canada was the EU's 12th most important trading partner, accounting for 1.8% of the EU's total external trade. In the same year the EU was Canada's second most important trading partner, after the U.S., with around 8.5% of Canada's total external trade.

Current EU tariffs (which will be removed) on:
- fish, seafood = up to 25% agricultural goods = average 13.9% Source: EU Commission

It’s about keeping Mainers working.

"The end of the year signals the hardest work time for our Maine lobstering crews. We hear their boat engines starting up in the dark at 4:30am. Tens of millions of Maine lobsters are caught the last four months of the year."

Maine Lobstering men and women create thousands of related Maine jobs for shipbuilders, ropemakers, haulers, bait dealers, fuel suppliers, boat designers, woodworkers, machinists, fiberglassers, electricians, mechanics, painters, processing plant workers, packaging manufacturers, refrigeration suppliers, cold storage engineers, land and sea freight companies, and truck drivers. Famous Maine lobster also stimulates business for Maine food chefs, caterers, tradeshows and festivals planners, food service sales and delivery teams, restaurants, tour promoters, book writers, illustrators, photographers, and publishers.

The Maine lobster season closes soon for 2013 but its residual impact sustains huge numbers of Maine families through the winter. We stand ready to be part of the solution to Maine’s problem of “seasonality” by opening new MSC Certified Maine lobster markets and by striving to grow the issuance of more weekly paychecks directly to workers in Maine lobster-and indirectly to related thousands who keep the heart of the Maine lobster industry pumping year-round.

Thank you all and have a wonderful holiday season.

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